Christian conditionalism

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Main articles: mortalism and annihilationism

In Christian theology, conditionalism or conditional immortality is a concept of special salvation in which the gift of immortality is attached to (conditional upon) belief in Jesus Christ. This doctrine is based in part upon another theological argument, that if the human soul is naturally mortal, immortality ("eternal life") is therefore granted by God as a gift. This viewpoint stands in contrast to the more popular doctrine of the "natural immortality" of the soul. It is usually paired with mortalism and annihilationism, the belief that the unsaved will be ultimately destroyed and cease to exist, rather than suffer unending torment in hell. The view is also connected with the idea of soul sleep, in which the dead sleep unconscious until the Resurrection of the Dead to stand for a Last Judgment before the World to Come.

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Protestantism

During the Reformation the German reformer Martin Luther was among notable advocates of conditional immortality, which prompted the French reformer John Calvin to criticize him for embracing the doctrine of "soul sleep."

The British Evangelical Alliance ACUTE report states the doctrine is a "significant minority evangelical view" that has "grown within evangelicalism in recent years".[1] In the 20th century, conditional immortality was considered by certain theologians in the Eastern Orthodox Church.[2]

Proponents of conditional immortality ("conditionalists") point to Genesis 2 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Genesis&verse=2&src=NIV) and Revelation 22 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Revelation&verse=22&src=NIV), where the Tree of Life is mentioned. It is argued that these passages, along with Genesis 3:22-24 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Genesis&verse=3:22-24&src=NIV) teach that human beings will naturally die without continued access to God's life-giving power.

As a general rule, conditionalism goes hand in hand with annihilationism; that is, the belief that the souls of the wicked will be destroyed in Gehenna (often translated "hell", especially by non-conditionalists and non-universalists) fire rather than suffering eternal torment. The two ideas are not exactly equivalent, however, because in principle God may annihilate a soul which was previously created immortal.[3] While annihilationism places emphasis on the active destruction of a person, conditionalism places emphasis on a person's dependence upon God for life; the extinction of the person is thus a passive consequence of separation from God, much like natural death is a consequence of prolonged separation from food, water, and air.

In secular historical analysis, the doctrine of conditional immortality reconciles the ancient Hebrew view that humans are mortal with the Christian view that the saved will live forever. [citation needed]
Mortalist groups such as Seventh-day Adventists, Christadelphians, the Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses sometimes argue that the doctrine of natural (or innate) immortality stems not from Hebrew thought as presented in the Bible, but rather from pagan influence, particularly Greek philosophy and the teachings of Plato, or Christian tradition. These groups note verses for example that Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=1%20Timothy&verse=6:15-16&src=NIV) that "God… alone is immortal," while in 2 Timothy 1:10 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=2%20Timothy&verse=1:10&src=NIV) he writes that immortality only comes to human beings as a gift through the gospel. Immortality is something to be sought after (Romans 2:7 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Romans&verse=2:7&src=NIV)) therefore it is not inherent to all humanity.[4]

These groups may claim that the doctrine of conditional immortality reconciles two seemingly conflicting traditions in the Bible: the ancient Hebrew concept that the human being is mortal with no meaningful existence after death (see הָרָע, Sheol and the Book of Ecclesiastes), and the later Jewish and Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead and personal immortality after Judgment Day.

See also

- Annihilationism
- Soul sleep

References

4. ^ Pearce F. After Death What?

External links

- Defining Conditionalism (http://www.afterlife.co.nz/2012/featured-article/defining-conditionalism-conditional-immortality/) Christian conditionalism is essentially an anthropological terms. It describes the nature of humanity as the Bible represents it. The article defines the term.
- Jewish not Greek (http://www.jewishnotgreek.com) Shows how Biblical hermeneutics proves "conditional immortality" and not the Greek philosophical view of innate immortality.
- The Resurrection and Immortality (http://www.robertwr.com) An exhaustive study into the biblical definition of immortality and proof of conditional immortality.


Freedom From Fear: What happens when you die? (http://willfults.com/happens-when-you-die/)

Truth About Death (http://truthaboutdeath.com/) Comprehensive site covering questions and answers regarding Christian conditionalism


Rethinking Hell (http://www.rethinkinghell.com/) Exploring Evangelical Conditionalism.

Afterlife.co.nz (http://www.afterlife.co.nz/) The Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand Inc. is a non-profit organization established to promote a Biblical understanding of human nature, life, death and eternity as taught throughout Scripture.


Categories: Christian soteriology | Seventh-day Adventist theology | Christian terms | Annihilationism